In an effort to increase awareness of Internet resources available to local governments and citizen planners the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has initiated a technical assistance program focused on computer tools for planning, conservation, and environmental protection. This program has been made possible by a water quality management grant awarded to the DNR by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

As part of our technical assistance program we have developed this series of articles. **Each article will highlight a different tool, discuss its possible uses, and offer step-by-step tutorials.** It is our hope that the information provided here will insure that all involved in local planning processes have equal access to valuable information and analysis tools. Gaining access to these free web-based planning tools will assist communities with preliminary selection of alternative approaches to watershed and community planning. When community planners, developers, and citizens have access to similar information they are more readily able to interact and jointly discover possible solutions to land use issues.

This series of articles can be found online at **http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/landuse/CompTools/local.htm**

Definition of a Tool–Data Access

To help evaluate the available tools, we have sorted them into three categories-tools for finding and accessing data, tools for making maps, and tools for predicting impacts. This article focuses on tools for finding and accessing data.

Data access tools give users access to a wide range of shared information. Many of the tools in this category serve as portals allowing users the ability to obtain demographic, geographic, environmental, and other data from multiple sources across the Internet. These portals give the user the ability to create a more comprehensive picture of their local community.

Federal, local, and state agencies invest significant resources collecting and managing data, much of which has value for local environmental protection and management efforts. The information holdings of agencies can include a broad range of data types in a variety of formats. Computer tools organize, catalog, and make these resources accessible, often in downloadable or online formats.

Data tools can be static web sites or searchable databases. Some focus only on a single dataset or data source (e.g., data from a particular land use study) or only on information related to a specific resource (e.g., endangered and threatened species or historical resources). Other data tools serve more as a clearinghouse, providing access to a variety of datasets and information sources. Some data tools guide users by letting them know how and where to find information rather than actually providing the information.

WDNR Drinking Water and Groundwater

The Wisconsin Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater manages activities that affect the safety, quality and availability of drinking water by preventing contamination of drinking water and groundwater to protect public health. The Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater developed and maintains data about Wisconsin's drinking water and groundwater quality.

To Use WDNR Drinking Water System

Using your Internet browser, go to **http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/data.htm**

There are four data systems to choose from depending on your interest.

Drinking Water System
The purpose of the Drinking Water System is to enforce Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) regulations covering Public Water Systems (PWS). The public Drinking Water System (DWS) is a data system created and maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater. It contains the monitoring and reporting requirements for each Public Water System and their drinking water sampling results. It also includes violations for any missing requirements and exceedances of the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs).

Groundwater Retrieval Network
This system reports data from the Department's Public Water Supply (public drinking water supply wells), Private Water Supply (private drinking water supply wells, non-point source priority watershed projects, and special groundwater studies), and the

Bureau of Waste's Groundwater and Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) (landfill wells). Data covers the period from the early 1970s to present for the Public Water Supply data, 1988 to present for the Private Water Supply data, and from the mid 1970s to present for the GEMS database

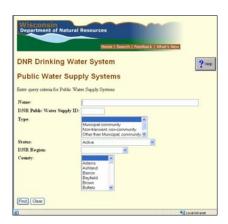**Drinking Water and Groundwater Standards and Health Advisory Levels**
This system includes a table of information with Wisconsin NR 140 Groundwater Enforcement Standard (ES), NR 809 Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) or Lifetime Health Advisory Level (HAL) for contaminants that apply to drinking water or groundwater.

Source Water Assessment
The 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act require that states complete source water assessments for all public drinking water systems. The primary purpose of an assessment is to determine the relative susceptibility of an area's source water to contamination. For all assessments on this site, susceptibility is defined as the likelihood that a contaminant of concern will enter a public water supply at a level that may result in adversely impacting human health. Source water is untreated water from streams, rivers, lakes, and groundwater aquifers. A susceptibility determination is based on a stepwise synthesis of information regarding the well or surface water intake vulnerability and the source water's sensitivity to a potential source of a contaminant of concern.

General Search Information

Enter one or more search criteria into the available

fields. Then, click <Find> to run the query. You may leave all fields blank but your search will take longer as a result of it. The more fields you fill in, the better your chances of quickly finding what you're looking for. However, you must match the

data exactly as it appears in the database, so unless you are sure of spellings, abbreviations, etc., you may want to limit your search criteria.

Click <Clear> to restart your query.

Click on any list item that is underlined and highlighted to bring up additional detail information.

If you would like to view the data in a spreadsheet form, click <Download> found at the bottom of each page which shows a set of records. This takes you to a screen allowing you to select specific fields to be downloaded. You must click <Submit> to complete the download. You have several options for download format, but the Excel option is simplest if you have that software available.

If you would like to enter a new query, click <Query> at the bottom of the screen.

Click <Help> for more searching tips.